

WEMU-FM, the public radio station licensed to Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan, wholeheartedly supports and encourages the FCC to authorize multiplexing of the digital audio signal in HD Radio.

While the technical quality provided by digital audio transmission is a definitive improvement over analog radio, the measure of the value of this new technology is its potential for providing more public service. This service takes the form of digital data services and, more importantly, an additional audio service.

The data service capacity which is currently available in the digital environment will provide a broad range of user information from simple playlists of music to important traffic and emergency alert information. The service options are being developed by a host of after-market companies limited only by their imagination, consumer needs and wants, and the resources at their disposal.

The prospect of a secondary audio channel (SAC) on the same frequency likewise has the greater potential to revolutionize the radio industry. WEMU converted to HD Radio on April 7, 2004, the first public radio station in Michigan to do so. While the enthusiasm for the increased audio quality inspired the conversion, the station recognizes that the true value of this technology is its ability to provide additional audio services. While the technology is important, it is the programming that will make the difference. Consumers may be swayed to invest in equipment that will provide for higher quality audio. However, they are more likely to adopt a technology that provides more choices, more opportunities for listening and greater value to them personally. This is the promise of a multiplexed signal in HD Radio

WEMU possesses the smallest coverage area among the public stations in Michigan. Its service is able to focus on its community and county of license. The potential to provide a second locally focused service to the Ann Arbor market is an awesome prospect. In essence, a multiplexed signal enables WEMU to offer a second radio station to the market. While formal plans for a second service do not exist, the possibilities for increased service do. From news services to classical music to foreign language programs the possibilities are only limited by imagination and monetary resources. No longer is the limitation that of frequency availability.

Approval of the use of a secondary audio channel paves the way for increased programming opportunities. In the short run, the ability to multiplex on a single frequency is an exciting concept full of potential. In the long term, it is an unprecedented expansion of the radio spectrum without increasing the physical spectrum itself. Early adoption permits software developers to explore the opportunities to provide stations with well-tested service concepts. Early adoption enables consumer radio manufacturers to adapt their designs to provide access to a multiplexed signal. Early adoption provides stations with the time to develop high quality program services in an integrated, cost effective and community oriented manner to inspire consumer adoption of the technology.